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Statement to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

The Sierra Club would like to thank the Fairfax Board for this opportunity to comment on the Fluor Daniel proposal for High-Occupancy Toll Lanes on the Capital Beltway in Northern Virginia. The Sierra Club is the nation's oldest and largest grassroots environmental group with 8,500 members in Northern Virginia.

The High-Occupancy Toll lane concept is a new innovation in transportation engineering that could provide an additional revenue stream for fiscally challenged state and local governments. The Sierra Club believes that the conversion of existing HOV lanes to HOT lanes is a viable way to raise critical funds for transit and transportation initiatives. However, HOT Lanes projects like the Fluor Daniel proposal that require the construction of new highway lanes raise serious questions about environmental impact, operational feasibility and public cost. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors needs answers to these questions before the Board makes comments to VDOT on the HOT Lanes proposal.

A 60-day extension of the feedback period for the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors is necessary to give the Board time to fully address questions about the HOT Lanes proposal and to formally solicit public input. These questions include:

- **How will the Metropolitan DC region offset the increase in VOC and NOx emission that would result from the construction of Fluor Daniel's HOT Lanes? How will Fluor Daniel protect Beltway area residents in Fairfax County from increased noise and air pollution?**
- **What safety improvements and transit system improvements to the Capital Beltway would be precluded by Fluor Daniel's non-compete clause?**
- **Is Express Bus Service feasible on the Capital Beltway, and what are the ridership estimates? What would be the state and local financial obligations to support the Express Bus Service?**
- **What are the projected operation and maintenance costs of the HOT facility, which are a public obligation?**
- **Does the Fluor Daniel HOT Lanes proposal address the public concerns presented at public hearings on the Beltway DEIS last spring?**

Many of these questions have been raised after studying the experience of the only other HOT Lanes project in the country that required new lane construction. Delays of 35-45 minutes along SR-91 in Orange County, CA, prompted the Orange County Transportation Authority to partner with the California Private Transportation Company to construct four new HOT Lanes – the

SR-91 Express Lanes -- in 1996. Initially, delays along the adjacent non-express roadway increased initially, however within just three years delays were again in the 30-40 minute range. Emissions of VOC's and NOx increased along the SR-91 corridor, and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments predicts a similar increase for the Capital Beltway HOT Lanes.

Additionally, accident rates were 72% higher on SR-91 than on other highways in the Orange County area. The California Department of Transportation attempted to make necessary safety improvements to that roadway, but the CPTC sued the state for breach of its non-compete clause, similar to the non-competing clause that Fluor Daniel is seeking for Beltway HOT Lanes. *Public frustrations over the non-compete clause, increased congestion in the non-express lanes and skyrocketing HOT tolls eventually forced the Orange County Transportation Authority to purchase the HOT project, which cost \$126 million to build, for a price of \$200 million.*

To really give commuters the access and mobility they need, we need a balanced approach to transportation that focuses on transit oriented development and pedestrian and bike-friendly neighborhoods. The Fluor Daniel proposal, with its lack of financial allocation and design support to transit services, does not support this vision. Further, the Fluor Daniel proposal does not address the concerns of the hundreds of Fairfax County residents that requested the inclusion of a rail alternative at Capital Beltway EIS hearings last spring.

The Fluor Daniel HOT Lanes proposal does offer many benefits to the Fluor Daniel, but the public benefits are questionable and the costs and risks are high. Again, we ask that the Fairfax Board seek a 60-day extension to the feedback period for local governments to comment on HOT Lanes. This extension will allow the Board time to get answers to the many questions raised by the Fluor Daniel proposal, and to formally solicit input from the public on this important transportation decision.

We also encourage the Board to reference the Sierra Club's position paper on HOT lanes for further explication of these concerns.

Thank you.